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ABSTRACT

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Eletra S. Gilchrist

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E. S. Gilchrist

CS 510 442

Communicator Style: A Study of College Students

The purpose of this study was to determine the communicator styles of college students in relation to success in school (as identified by GPA), extracurricular participation, education level, and gender. This study also explored whether or not college students generally have a positive communicator image. The human subjects studied were limited to a sample of college students from a large southeastern university.

Significance of Study

Several benefits are associated with this study. A review of current and relevant literature indicates that some research has been conducted to examine the relationship between communicator style and various factors leading to success. For example, the research conducted by Duran and Kelly (1994) reveals there is a relationship between communication competence and school success. Similarly, this study seeks to further explore the notion made by Duran and Kelly.

Consequently, this study serves to identify the styles of communication, which should provide a broader range in which to study student school success. In the process, this study aims to either support or disprove the current information. The study also has the potential for discovering new information pertaining to the subject for further research regarding the communicator styles and success of college students.

Benson (1985) summarized Baird's (1976) gender-oriented group research, which suggested males are more aggressive, problem-solving oriented, and resistant to social influence. This research also proved that men are more likely to emerge as leaders in

comparison to female counterparts. On the contrary, females are more self-disclosing, emotionally expressive, and sensitive than males. This proposed study attempts to offer support to these scholars, who conclude that gender affects communicator style.

By noting the relationship between communicator style and success in school, this study provides college educators and staff members with information concerning the extent to which college students have a positive communicator image. This information could assist educators in planning course assignments that meet the needs of students based on the students' perceptions of their communication ability. These professionals could also better understand why some students have higher GPAs and are involved in more extracurricular activities than others are. By knowing the communication styles that are likely to be associated with high extracurricular activity involvement and high GPAs, educators could seek to illicit these styles in their students. In addition, this study provides information to educators concerning the communicator style students have based on gender. This is useful because it gives educators a better understanding of how to educate and communicate with students of the opposite gender.

Organization of Study

The study begins with a review of related literature, which presents a summary of the current information concerning communicator style, communication competence, the Norton Communicator Style Measure, and gender related to communication style and competence. The methodology section follows the literature review, which includes a description of the sample studied, an explanation of the survey used, and a synopsis of how the data were collected. An analysis of the data proceeds the methodology, which

summarizes the statistics and analyzes the research questions. The study ends by summarizing the study, drawing conclusions from the results, and offering recommendations regarding the study.

Review of Related Literature

The study of communication focuses on the messages exchanged between people, and it examines how the messages affect various aspects of people's lives (Petronio, Alberts, Hecht, and Buley, 1993, p. 3). Current literature has identified style, competence, and gender as crucial elements comprising the communication process. The communicator style measure emerged in 1978 as a tool for determining an individual's style and linking that style to a person's competence level. Research agrees that both males and females have the potential to be competent communicators, although there is not a consensus concerning the exact differences and similarities of how males and females communicate. An awareness of competent communication begins with a clear understanding of style.

Style

"Anything that is said must be said in some way, and that way is style" (Tannen, 1984). In other words, speech styles are simply "ways of speaking" (Tannen, 1984 p. 2). Style is not a new concept to the field of communication studies. In fact, the idea of style began with the Sophists in ancient Greece. Since its emergence, communication scholars have incorporated it as a practical part of speechmaking. For example, Cicero included it

in his Rhetorical Canon, during the Roman era. In addition, style was a vital component of Aristotle's concept of rhetoric (Kennedy, 1991).

Norton and Montgomery (1982) reported that communication always contains both a message and a style component. The style element is a relational component which "signals how literal meaning is to be taken, filtered, or understood" (p. 400). If communication takes place, style is always present.

Norton (1983) added the following to the concept of communicator style:

> Style in the context of interpersonal communication is the way one communicates. It can be defined broadly as "the signals that are provided to help process, interpret, filter, or understand literal meaning." As such, communicator style gives form to literal meaning. Communicator style is marked by the following characteristics: It is (1) observable, (2) multifaceted, (3) multicollinear, and (4) variable, but sufficiently patterned (p. 47).

To say communicator style is observable means that it is detectable through a person's actions, such as gestures, body movement and eye and facial expressions. Also, each individual has aspects of many communicator styles, which Norton termed as multifaceted. Norton also described style variables as being multicollinear, which means the style variables are not dependent on each other. This entails that elements of one style overlap with elements of another style. A communicator's style is, furthermore, not an absolute representation of a person's method of communication. Thus, styles are variables. Consequently, a person can deviate from a particular style pattern. (Norton, 1983, p. 47-53).

Norton and Brenders (1996) identified two ways to talk about a person's communicator style. First, a microsense refers to a person's style as being ongoing and sending multiple signals. Second, a macrosense, refers to the way a person communicates

over a period of time (p. 74). A microsense style means that whenever a person communicates, he or she presents at least two sources of information, which are content and style. Content refers to the literal meaning sent in the message. On the other hand, "style messages are signals about how to process content" (p.75). A macrosense style establishes communication norms. Facial expressions and vocal tones establish the conditions surrounding the communication, which means they inform the receiver of why communication is taking place (p. 86-87). In other words, styles in the microsense and macrosense are necessary to reduce ambiguity and provide communication predictability.

Research has also shown that style is important to study because people are constantly judging and being judged by their style of communication. Having an understanding of style also helps people understand and deal with the misunderstandings that arise while communicating (Tannen, 1984, p. 4-5).

While style is an important communicator element, it is not the only factor. Competence is also essential when studying the broad scope of communication.

Competence

Rubin (1982) defined communication competence as "the ability to use language to communicate within a specific situation" (p. 19). Benson (1985) added that a competent communicator has the ability to "select from a situationally appropriate repertoire of communicative behaviors and attain positive outcomes" (p. 122). Chomsky (1965) and Pylyshyn (1973) defined competence as "a mental phenomenon distinct and separate from behavior," which means competence is tied to the individual's knowledge of language. Phillips (1984) further defined competence as being "based on observed

skill and evaluated in terms of effectiveness in goal achievement." Rubin and Henzel (1984) reported the findings of additional research which said goals, behavioral skills, and the opinion of others concerning one's communication competence are all important elements in the broad scope of competence (263-64).

Duran and Kelly (1994) referred to a meta-analysis of the research on competence, which found there is a positively strong association between communication competence and self-esteem, reading proficiency, community involvement, and school performance (p. 119). Duran and Kelly also noted that participation in high school activities is directly related to an individual's self-perception of communication competence. Based on Duran's and Kelly's findings, it is assumed that those experiences in high school enable students to enter social groups in college based on that same perception of communication competence. Research has further found that participation in extracurricular activities develops and refines communication competence and gives students the incentive to try new and diverse social groups (123-24).

An understanding of style and competence establishes a framework to examine the communicator style measure developed by Norton (1978). The instrument is used to determine style and measure competence.

Communicator Style Measure

Norton (1978) defined communicator style as "the way one verbally, nonverbally, and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood," (Norton, 1983, p. 11). The definition identifies ten independent variables and one dependent variable. The independent variables are also known as

subconstructs. They include dominant, dramatic, contentious, animated, impression leaving, relaxed, precise, attentive, open, and friendly.

First, the dominant style is characterized by taking charge of social situations, speaking frequently, and controlling situations. Second, the dramatic speaker acts out a point physically and vocally through jokes, stories, and exaggerations. Contentious is an argumentative style. Here, speakers challenge others and require them to show proof. Fourth, the animated style is characterized by constant gestures, including numerous facial expressions. Fifth, the impression-leaving style is characterized by leaving a memorable impression upon others. Sixth, the relaxed style characterizes people who are calm and have a collected way of interacting, even when under pressure. Seventh, the attentive style is characterized by listening to others carefully. Eye contact and nodding are features of this style. Eighth, is the open style, which is characterized by revealing personal information and expressing emotions. It is conversational, frank, and approachable. Ninth, is the friendly style. The person using this style gives positive feedback to recognize, encourage, and reinforce others. Last, is the precise communicator style, which is characterized by being specific and unambiguous (Norton, 1983, p. 62-74).

Norton (1978) labeled communicator image as the dependent variable. This is a person's opinion of his or her communicative ability, which can be either positive or negative. In addition, communicator image is an evaluative response. For example, "I am a good communicator" (58). Dominant and impression-leaving styles usually predict communicator image.

Each independent and dependent variable in the communicator style is commonly referred to as a subconstruct.

Norton's (1983) research further found that for each individual there is "at least one enduring or habitual pattern that defines a norm or norm deviation" (p. 45). Thus, style is a construct, which describes a central tendency of behavior. Horvath (1995) concluded that although situations may cause behavior to vary, style is mostly consistent.

Norton's (1983) research has found that the subconstructs group together into active and passive clusters. Dominant, dramatic, animated, contentious, open, and impression leaving group into an active cluster, which entails communication behaviors that emphasize action and being talkative. On the other hand, attentive, precise, friendly, and relaxed group to form the passive cluster, which is noted as being receiver and other-oriented. Based on Norton's research on style, Horvath (1995) noted that communicator style is "a global construct, representing a myriad of communication dispositions" (p. 394-95). Table 1 depicts the communicator style variables and clusters.

Table 1

Communicator Style Variables and Clusters

Variables	Clusters			
	Active	Passive	Positive	Negative
Independent				
Dominant	X			
Dramatic	X			
Animated	X			
Contentious	X			
Impression leaving	X			
Open	X			
Attentive		X		
Friendly		X		
Precise		X		
Relaxed		X		
Dependent				
Communicator Image			X	X

When considering the communicator style variables and clusters, there is a question concerning whether or not gender differences predict or determine style and competence.

Gender

There is some ambiguity in relation to gender and school success. In fact, the existing literature does not give a clear answer to the types of communication styles that predict school success for either gender. However, Lakoff's (1975) research popularized the notion that males and females use language differently. Trenholm and Jensen (1996) reported that social rules make men and women have different vocabularies. Women often use indirect, polite, and expressive communication. On the contrary, men's talk is more goal-oriented, literal, direct, and to the point (p. 103-04). Women also have the tendency to "watch what they say and translate what they are feeling and thinking into male terms. When masculine and feminine meanings and expressions conflict, the masculine tends to win out because of the dominance of males in society, and the result is that women are muted" (p. 105-06).

On the other hand, a study conducted by Montgomery and Norton (1981) found that males and females, in relation to communication styles, have more similarities than differences. The study found that males are more precise, and women are more animated in their styles. Yet, both sexes are considered as being effective communicators with the impression leaving and dominant styles (p. 121-32).

Benson (1985) summarized Baird's (1976) research, which suggested males are more "active, aggressive, interested in problem solving, risk prone, resistant to social

influence, and likely to emerge as leaders" than women. On the contrary, females were found to be "more self-disclosing, expressive of their emotional states, perceptive of others' emotional states, and sensitive to nonverbal cues." Marr (1974) noted that females are more rational than males when it is necessary to make a decision involving a threat (p. 96).

Comparing the Work of Baird

Based on Baird's (1976) research on gender communication differences and Norton's (1978) clusters of communicator style, the literature tends to suggest that males primarily communicate in the dominant, contentious, and impression leaving clusters. As indicated in Table 2 aggressive is categorized as a dominant, contentious, and impression-leaving style. Problem solving appears to fall mainly within the contentious cluster. Resistant to social influence is also seen as belonging to the contentious cluster as well as the dominant cluster. The research by Baird (1976) and Norton (1978) also seems to suggests that females communicate basically within the dramatic, animated, attentive, open, and friendly clusters. Table 2 also confers that the speech characteristic of self-disclosing is included within the open cluster. Emotional expressive is assumed to be part of the dramatic, animated, and attentive clusters. In addition, sensitive is seen as a speech style of the attentive and friendly clusters.

Table 2

Baird's suggestions in relation to the ten communicator styles

	DO	DR	CO	AN	IL	R	AT	O	FR	PR
M	X2		X3		X					
F		X		X			X2	X	X	

- M = male; F = female; DO = dominant; DR = dramatic; CO = contentious; AN = animated; IL = impression-leaving; R = relaxed; AT = attentive; O = open; FR = friendly; PR = precise

Considering the research based solely from Baird (1976) and Norton (1978), this study assumes neither males nor females communicate mainly from the relaxed or precise clusters.

Research has found that the differences in communication purposes result in gender speech variations. For example, males are task-oriented. Thus, males communicate instrumentally. On the contrary, females are seen as emotional and social, which makes them communicate for affiliation (Briton and Hall, 1995, p. 79-90).

Based on the current literature on the relationship between gender and communication style, there is a lack of consensus concerning how males and females use language.

In other words, communication scholars have devoted much time to defining and identifying the types of communicator styles. Competence is viewed as an important element for effective communication. Existing research, however, is in conflict concerning whether or not gender is a deciding factor in the amount of communication

competence one has. Additionally, research has not sufficiently addressed whether or not there is a significant relationship between communicator style and a student's success in school as determined by extracurricular involvement and grade point average (GPA).

Methodology

The literature suggests that there is a relationship between communicator style and success. This study has attempted to either validate or disprove the current literature by examining whether or not there is a relationship between a student's communicator style and his or her success in school.

Sample

The human subjects studied were limited to a sample of college students from a large southeastern university. The students were enrolled in communication classes within the college. A total of 200 subjects participated in the study, which included 68 males and 132 females. Of research participants, 21 were extremely involved, 32 were very involved, 92 were moderately involved, 44 were involved a little, and 8 were not involved at all. Also, the subjects consisted of 44 freshmen, 55 sophomores, 39 juniors, 41 seniors, 6 graduate students, and 14 others. In addition, the GPAs of the subjects were reported as follows: 36 ranging between 3.5 and 4.0; 41 included in 3.49 and 3.0; 58 between 2.9 and 2.5; 43 within 2.49 and 2.0; 8 within 1.9 and 1.5; 3 included in 1.49 and 1.0; and 7 having less than a 1.0 GPA.

Stimulus Material

The survey tool included three main sections of information. The first section contained the demographic information of gender, education classification, GPA, and extracurricular involvement. The second section of the instrument included detailed instructions for completing the survey. The third section included the Norton Communicator Style Measure, which features 51 Likert-type questions. The instrument was accompanied by an acknowledgement of consent form, which subjects completed stating their voluntary agreement to participate in this study. The consent form also insured the participants that the collected data was confidential.

The Norton (1978, 1983) Communicator Style Measure (CSM) is a survey developed by Norton to measure communication styles. The survey is a self-reporting tool. Consequently, it is designed to measure an individual's perception of personal communicator image and style.

The CSM measures ten independent characteristics and one dependent dimension of communicator styles. Each item response is rated from 1 to 5. The greatest amount of agreement with the statement is represented by 5; a 4 indicates moderate agreement; a 3 is neutral; a 2 denotes moderate disagreement; and 1 represents the least amount of agreement.

The ten subconstructs representing the independent variables contain four items per subconstruct. The ten independent variables are dominant, dramatic, contentious, animated, impression leaving, relaxed, attentive, open, friendly, and precise. Communicator Image is the dependent variable. Norton (1978, 1983) defined this as a

person's opinion of his or her communicative ability, which can be either positive or negative. Dominant and impression-leaving styles usually predict communicator image.

Questions 3, 6, 38, and 46 fit within the friendly construct. Questions 4, 5, 14, and 45 relate to the impression-leaving construct. Questions 8, 9, 15, and 16 concern the relaxed construct. Questions 10, 36, 37, and 42 refer to the contentious construct. Questions 11, 20, 39, and 49 are designed to measure the attentive communicator style. Questions 13, 27, 30, and 40 correlate with the precise construct. Questions 17, 23, 44, and 47 are associated with the animated construct. Questions 18, 22, 32, and 48 relate to the dramatic construct. Questions 21, 24, 34, and 50 are aimed at measuring the open communicator style. Questions 28, 35, 41, and 48 refer to the dominant construct. Questions 7, 19, 26, 29, and 51 represent communicator image. Questions 1, 2, 12, 25, 31, and 33 were included only as filler questions and were not used in measuring the communicator styles of the subjects. Table 3 represents what questions relate to each communicator construct.

Norton (1983) reported that the CSM has demonstrated high structural validity and stability. Research designates the validity of the alpha scores as follows: open (.71 to .85), dramatic (.87), relaxed (.76 to .82), contentious (.91), impression leaving (.96), dominant (.75 to .93), friendly (.93), precise (.95), attentive (.94), animated (.98), and communicator image (.70). In a study conducted by Payne (1996), the overall instrument reliability was (.889), and the communicator image reliability was (.7).

Data Collection

The subjects were obtained from four communication classes at a large southeastern university. Surveys were administered on four different occasions. For their time and cooperation, some of the student participants received extra credit from the instructor. All subjects received a copy of a consent form acknowledging their voluntary agreement to participate in this study. The subjects also received a copy of the Norton's Communicator Style Measure Survey. Each survey contained a set of instructions and a demographic checklist. Subjects were allowed fifteen minutes to complete the survey. Upon completion, subjects turned in the consent form and survey to either the instructor or the researcher.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the study were analyzed using quantitative statistical methods, which dealt with linear regression concentrating on prediction. This method of analysis is used to predict one variable based on the knowledge of scores on another variable. In other words, regression can predict a score (Y) based on another score (X). However, regression does not imply that X caused Y or vice versa. Instead, the statistics only confirm a predictive relationship between the two variables. The research questions and the corresponding statistical analysis addressed in the study were as follows:

Research Questions and Analysis

Question 1: To what extent do college students have a positive communicator image?

Analysis: Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the five questions relating to the communicator image construct.

Question 2: Do the demographic variables of gender, education level, GPA, and extracurricular activity involvement significantly predict communicator style?

Analysis: This question was answered by performing an exploratory analysis that involved regression analysis.

Analysis of Data

The Norton Communicator Style Measure was the chosen instrument. It featured 51 Likert-like questions designed to measure the ten independent variables and the dependent variable of communicator image. Only 45 items were scored. Questions 1, 2, 12, 25, 31, and 33 are filler items and where, therefore, not included in the scoring process.

Responses to each item were rated from 1 to 5. The highest rating, 5, was associated with the greatest amount of agreement with the statement. In contrast, the lowest rating, 1, was associated with the greatest amount of statement disagreement. As suggested by Norton (1983), a value of 3 was given to all missing data. Also, the scores of items 8, 15, 21, and 51 were reversed.

Table 3 gives a representation of the frequencies, the mean, and the standard deviation.

Table 3

Frequencies, means, and standard deviations

Item	NO! (1)	No (2)	? (3)	Yes (4)	YES! (5)	M	SD
1	6	32	19	103	39	3.6884	1.0557
2	0	8	12	92	88	4.3000	.7569
3	4	23	45	105	23	3.6000	.9078
4	0	9	86	86	19	3.5750	.7260
5	1	14	64	88	32	3.6834	.8440
6	0	19	44	118	19	3.6850	.7738
7	1	26	51	96	25	3.5930	.8877
8	20	79	31	61	9	2.8000	1.1163
9	5	36	48	96	13	3.3838	.9420
10	12	69	37	63	19	3.0400	1.1335
11	6	77	58	51	7	2.8794	.9458
12	3	18	52	102	25	3.6400	.8684
13	4	43	75	62	16	3.2150	.9398
14	0	12	80	88	20	3.5800	.7526
15	23	96	31	44	6	2.5700	1.0491

16	12	47	56	73	11	3.1206	1.0277
17	3	31	61	71	33	3.5025	.9943
Item	NO! (1)	No (2)	? (3)	YES! (4)	Yes (5)	M	SD
18	13	68	33	53	33	3.1250	1.2316
19	7	51	23	93	25	3.3920	1.1042
20	2	24	46	109	18	3.5879	.8534
21	38	79	28	46	9	2.5450	1.1682
22	11	43	28	81	37	3.4500	1.1766
23	3	44	34	80	38	3.5327	1.0814
24	3	40	47	79	30	3.4673	1.0238
25	8	61	36	65	30	3.2400	1.1572
26	6	43	45	86	20	3.3550	1.0219
27	4	60	45	64	27	3.2500	1.0878
28	9	44	31	87	27	3.3990	1.1117
29	10	39	35	80	36	3.4650	1.1425
30	2	45	52	88	13	3.3250	.9294
31	15	71	49	51	14	2.8900	1.0880
32	7	50	44	79	20	3.2750	1.0559
33	7	33	63	77	19	3.3417	.9816
34	16	69	38	65	11	2.9296	1.1033
35	14	51	62	63	10	3.0200	1.0271
36	18	67	36	57	21	2.9799	1.1890

37	12	50	33	75	29	3.2965	1.1710
38	2	13	37	102	45	3.8794	.8678
Item	YES! (1)	Yes (2)	? (3)	NO! (4)	No (5)	M	SD
39	5	27	39	90	38	3.6482	1.0185
40	12	54	44	74	75	3.1200	1.0916
41	7	63	49	64	17	3.1050	1.0533
42	5	45	24	91	35	3.5300	1.0978
43	15	62	62	56	5	2.8700	.9889
44	4	35	63	82	16	3.3550	.9291
45	1	19	61	99	18	3.5758	.8072
46	2	16	45	106	30	3.7337	.8495
47	1	19	43	91	45	3.8040	.9139
48	3	44	37	90	26	3.4600	1.0216
49	2	20	58	99	21	3.5850	.8464
50	20	55	39	68	18	3.0450	1.1747
51	3	7	28	69	91	4.2020	.9177

Table 4 represents the gender frequencies.

Table 4

Number of Male and Female Participants

Males	Females
68	132

Table 5 represents the education frequencies.

Table 5

Education Frequencies

Freshmen	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate	Other
44	55	40	41	6	14

Table 6 represents the GPA frequencies.

Table 6

GPA Frequencies

4.0-3.5	3.49-3.0	2.99-2.5	2.49-2.0	1.9-1.5	1.49-1.0	< 1.0	OTHER
37	41	58	43	8	3	6	1

Table 7 represents the extracurricular activity involvement frequencies.

Table 7

Involvement Frequencies

Extremely involved	Very involved	Moderately involved	Involved a little	Not involved
21	32	93	44	8

Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent do college students have a positive communicator image?

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the five questions relating to the communicator image construct. This gave the following results:

Gender: The female gender related to communicator image by the following: $F(2.306)=.507$, $p<.05$, accounting for 2.53% of the variance. That is to say, there is an emerging relationship between females and a positive communicator image.

Education: The relationship observed between education and communicator image included: $F(2.562)=5.208$, $p<.05$, accounting for 26.04% of the variance. That is to say, as education increases so did the emergence of a positive communicator image.

GPA: The demographic variable of GPA was observed as relating to communicator image in the following way: $F(2.562)=5.208$, $p<.05$, accounting for 26.04% of the variance. That is to say, as GPA increased so did the emergence of a positive communicator image.

Involvement: The study found that extracurricular activity involvement related to communicator style as follows: $F(6.789)=5.790$, $p<.01$, which accounted for 28.95% of the variance. That is to say, as involvement increased so did the emergence of a positive communicator image.

Research Question 2: Do the variables of gender, education level, GPA, and extracurricular involvement predict communicator style?

Several interesting relationships emerged as a result of the regression analysis:

Gender: The female gender related to the communicator variables of friendly, precise, animated, and communicator image. In relation to the friendly style, the following relationship was observed: $F(2.902)=.633$, $p<.05$, accounting for 2.53% of the variance. The following relationship was observed with the precise style: $F(3.070)=.665$, $p<.05$, accounting for 2.66% of the variance. The following relationship was observed between gender and the animated style: $F(3.232)=.702$, $p<.05$, accounting for 2.81% of the variance. As stated previously, the relation of gender to communicator image was observed to be: $F(2.306)=.507$, $p<.05$, accounting for 2.53% of the variance. That is to say, females are likely to communicate using the friendly, precise, and animated styles. Females are also more likely to have a more positive communicator image than males.

Education: Education level was related to the relaxed, dominant, and communicator image subconstructs. The following emerging relationship was observed between education level and the relaxed communicator style: $F(5.003)=9.457$, $p<.01$, accounting for 37.83% of the variance. In relation to the dominant style variable, the following relationship was observed: $F(4.734)=9.252$, $p<.01$, accounting for 37.01% of the variance. The previously stated relationship observed between education level and communicator image included the following: $F(2.562)=5.208$, $p<.05$, accounting for 26.04% of the variance. That is to say, as the education level increases there is an emerging relationship between it and the relaxed, dominant, and communicator image subconstructs.

GPA: The results of this study found a relationship between GPA and the communicator variables of precise, open, and communicator image. The relationship between GPA and the precise style was observed as follows: $F(3.781)=11.388$, $p<.01$,

accounting for 45.55% of the variance. GPA related to the open style as: F(3.370)=10.268, p<.05, accounting for 41.07% of the variance. As mentioned earlier, the following relationship was observed between GPA and communicator image: F(4.615)=13.474, p<.01, accounting for 67.37% of the variance. That is to say, as GPA increases, the emerging relationship between GPA and the precise, open, and communicator image subconstructs also increases.

Involvement: This study found an emerging relationship between extracurricular activity involvement and the communicator styles of friendly, relaxed, attentive, precise, open, dominant, and communicator image. The relationship between involvement and the friendly subconstruct was as follows: F(6.560)=5.764, p<.01, which accounted for 23.06% of the variance. The following relationship was observed between involvement and the relaxed communicator style: F(6.554)=5.642, p<.01, which accounted for 22.57% of the variance. The relationship between involvement and the attentive style was as follows: F(2.833)=2.655, p<.05, which accounted for 10.62% of the variance. Involvement related to the precise style as: F(3.965)=3.626, p<.01, which accounted for 14.50% of the variance. The relationship between involvement and the open style was as observed follows: F(3.104)=2.858, p<.05, which accounted for 11.43% of the variance. The relationship observed between involvement and the dominant style is expressed as: F(2.877)=2.714, p<.05, which accounted for 10.85% of the variance. As stated before, the following relationship was observed between involvement and communicator image: F(6.789)=5.790, p<.01, which accounted for 28.95% of the variance. The previously described relationships mean that as involvement in extracurricular activities increases, so does the emergence of the friendly, relaxed, attentive, precise, open, dominant, and

communicator image subconstructs. It is also interesting to note that the demographic variable of involvement included all the communicator styles observed with the other demographic variables of gender, education level, and GPA except animated, as observed with gender.

In the regression analysis, three communicator styles had no relationship to any of the demographic variables: impression leaving, contentious, and dramatic. Also, the study did not reveal the impact the variables have on one another. Therefore, the interplay among the variables cannot be determined.

The purpose for conducting this study was to determine the communication styles of college students in relation to gender, education level, GPA, and extracurricular involvement. The study also examined the extent that college students have a positive communicator image. The Norton Communicator Style Measure was the survey tool used to investigate the self-perceptions of how the college students communicate.

This study found a relationship between the female gender and the friendly, precise, and animated communicator styles. The study also discovered an emerging relationship between higher education and the relaxed and dominant styles. In relation to GPA, the study found that as GPA increases, there is an emerging relationship between it and the precise and open communicator styles. This study also detected an emerging relationship between increased extracurricular activity involvement and the friendly, relaxed, attentive, precise, open, and dominant communicator styles. The study also found an emerging relationship between having a positive communicator image and being female, having higher education, higher GPAs, and increased extracurricular activity involvement.

Since this study has provided new insight concerning the way college students communicate, the foundation for additional research has been established.

Review of Study and Limitations

This study was designed to better understand college students' self-perceptions of their communication style and communication image. The need for such a study was established in the Review of Related Literature. For example, Norton (1983) defined communicator style as "the way one verbally, nonverbally, and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filter, or understood." Thus, by examining student communication styles, this study offered an understanding in relation to student interaction. Also, Baird's (1976) research found that males and females have different communication styles. This study served to test the validity of Baird's findings.

College students at a large southeastern university represent the study's sample. The study reflects the self-perceptions of communicator style and image of 200 students. Data were collected on four different occasions.

Two research questions were presented in the study for analysis.

Research Question 1: To what extent do college students have a positive communicator image?

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the five questions relating to the communicator image construct.

Research Question 2: Do the variables of gender, education level, GPA, and extracurricular involvement predict communicator style?

Regression analysis was used to investigate these relationships.

Statistics used to analyze the data were appropriate in explaining the subjects' self-perceptions of communication style and image in relation to the demographic variables of GPA, education level, gender, and extracurricular activity involvement.

As with most research endeavors, limitations abound. This study is no exception. One limitation includes the sample population being limited to a group of students from a large southeastern university. A second limitation concerns the Norton Communicator Style Measure as the only survey tool used. Additionally, the study is limited in that the college students' communicator styles and competence levels were measured only in terms of a self-reporting tool. This limits the study because the information was not examined from another's perspective.

Conclusions

Knowledge about the communication styles and communicator images of college students has been acquired from this study. This section presents conclusions about the data analysis.

Based on the data analysis, five conclusions are made:

1. Females have a higher communicator image than males. Also, as students' education level, GPA, and extracurricular activity involvement increase, their communicator image also improves.
2. Females are likely to communicate using the friendly, precise, and animated communicator styles.
3. As the education level increases, so does the likelihood of the students' usage of the relaxed and dominant communication styles.

4. As GPA increases, students are likely to communicate using the precise and open communication styles.
5. Students who are highly involved with extracurricular activities tend to communicate using the friendly, relaxed, attentive, precise, open, and dominant styles.

Based on the findings, this study supports Baird's (1976) research, which suggests females communicate using the animated and friendly communication styles. However, this study also discovered that females communicate using the precise style, and they have a positive communicator image, which Baird did not include in his research. Baird also suggested that females communicate using the dramatic, attentive, and open styles, which are not supported by this study. In relation to males, Baird suggested that males communicate using the dominant, contentious, and impression-leaving styles. However, this study did not have sufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the notions made by Baird, regarding the male communicator styles.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered in regard to using the findings of this study:

Implications for education and leadership training: This study has found that students with a greater repertoire of communication styles have higher GPAs and are more involved in extracurricular activities. Having a greater repertoire of styles could be useful in interpersonal experiences. To develop such skills, educators should encourage students to participate in leadership programs. Based on the findings from this study, researchers could investigate the characteristics surrounding extracurricular activities that

impact communication styles. Likewise, researchers should explore what elements make people succeed.

This study has found that students with higher GPAs communicate using the precise and open communicator styles. Using this study as a foundation, researchers should explore whether or not the school curriculum rewards the open and precise communication styles. If the curriculum is found to reward these styles, researchers should examine the characteristics surrounding school curriculum that reward the open and precise communication styles. However, if the current curriculum is found to be void of rewards for communicating using the open and precise styles, researchers should develop reward mechanisms, which could assist in eliciting these styles from their students. In addition, this study did not examine whether the precise and open communication styles emerged as a result of academic success or if communicating using the precise and open style result in academic success. Future research could explore this causal relationship.

This study has found that students, who are highly involved in extracurricular activities communicate using the friendly, relaxed, attentive, precise, open, and dominant styles. Consequently, to assist students in becoming more involved in campus activities and community service projects, leadership trainers and directors should consider conducting communication workshop or seminars, which focus on the friendly, relaxed, attentive, precise, open, and dominant communication styles.

Implications for training students based on gender: The results of this study revealed that females are likely to communicate using the friendly, precise, and animated communicator styles. It also found that females tend to have a higher communicator

image. Consequently, this study indicates that the assumptions made in the past may not necessarily be accurate. For example, Trenholm and Jensen (1996) claimed that "when masculine and feminine meanings and expressions conflict, the masculine tends to win out because of the dominance of males in society, and the result is that women are muted" (p. 105-06). However, this study found an emerging relationship between females and a positive communicator image. If this is the case, it is unlikely that females are so easily "muted" when communicating with males.

Implications and recommendations for future research: This study explored a universal approach to understanding the success of college students. Future research should use this study as a basis to study more specifics. For example, based on the students' communicator styles and communicator images, which students are more competent? Also, future research could explore the various training courses that could increase desired communicator styles from their students. This study also found that as students' education levels increased, the students were more likely to communicate using the relaxed and dominant styles. Future research could explore the communication styles students at lower education levels have because an understanding of the students' styles of communication could help educators develop curriculums to encourage success in these students also. Although the study examined the communication styles and images of females, it did not, however, determine the communication styles that are predominantly found in males.

Summary

According to Norton (1978), among the greatest payoffs offered by communicator style construct comes when the self-reporting measure can be used to predict communication behaviors. Such has been the objective here. The current study was successful in determining the communication styles of college students in relation to GPA, education level, extracurricular activity involvement, and gender. The study showed that the demographic variables of GPA, education level, extracurricular activity, and gender may predict specific communication styles. This study has also served to support and validate the suggestions offered by other researchers.

The results of the data analysis for this study have been instrumental in providing a foundation for understanding how college students perceive their communication styles and images. This study has also offered some recommendations concerning how to further explore the presented evidence. Researchers have examined the importance of understanding communication styles for years, the findings of this study warrant justification for additional research concerning communication style and school success.

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